

Abstract

Values include a broad range of terms and are defined by different disciplines and across cultures and societies. In sustainable agricultural development, values are increasingly addressed as a means to understand the relationship between man and nature (Chan, Gould, & Pascual, 2018; Díaz et al., 2015). However, such debate is rarely discussed in the context of China. To narrow the lacuna, this paper takes Chinese ecological agriculture (CEA), a loosely defined concept, as an example to capture the role of values in sustainability transition, with a reflection on the relationship between man and nature. Specifically, this paper proposed three questions: what is the concept of ecological agriculture as expressed in current policies in China?; what are the values in CEA?; and how do values affect the ecological agriculture implementation in China? To answer these three questions, this paper conducted a literature review and a case study from a local level. The results found held values, instrumental values, intrinsic values and relational values produced synergy effect on CEA implementation in varying degrees. Other than that, policies and political rhetoric contributed to the CEA implementation and its social construct, respectively. The results also found that the concept CEA evolves with the development of policies. Currently, CEA combines traditional agricultural wisdom with modern innovative technologies to achieve economic, social and ecological benefits while maintaining the carrying capacity of resources and contributing to increase in farmers' income. Recommendations were made to enrich the various aspects of CEA values, to refine the CEA concept, and to include various perspectives to facilitate the CEA development.

Keywords: Chinese ecological agriculture, values, nature, sustainability transition, policy